

**MINUTES**  
**STATE PRESERVES ADVISORY BOARD**  
**Wallace State Office Building**  
**January 5, 2007**

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT**

Scott Moats  
Carl Kurtz  
Laura Jackson, Chair  
Cindy Peterson  
Liz Christiansen  
Armando Rosales  
Deb Lewis

**STAFF PRESENT**

John Pearson  
Daryl Howell  
Bob McKay

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairperson Laura Jackson called the meeting to order at 10:00 AM on January 5, 2007 at the Wallace State Office Building.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Add: Preserves Update on Ames High Prairie – John Pearson

***Motion was made by Armando Rosales to approve the agenda as amended. Seconded by Liz Christiansen. Motion carried.***

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

***Motion was made by Cindy Peterson to approve the minutes from the September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2006 meeting. Seconded by Liz Christiansen. Motion carried.***

## **RFP FOR FISCAL YEAR 2008**

The Board was provided with a draft request for proposals for the period of July 1, 2007 to June 30, 2008. The Board is asked to provide comments and any changes to the RFP. The RFP will be released in mid January.

Laura Jackson said that the only thing we really ask for regarding Flora and Fauna inventories is the list of species. Though it is very valuable, when we talk to managers there's not a whole lot they can do with the species list. I believe it would be more beneficial if it listed the threats, distributions, locations, are they changing, growing, etc. Conservation planning is not really reflected in our RFP, although it's in the contract. On the RFP, directly under Biological Studies, before the fauna listing I suggest that we include the following language: *The following preserves are in need of conservation assessments to document to protect the flora and/or fauna composition of the preserve.*

Principally the conservation assessment consists of a comprehensive species inventory list, which is what we ask for now.

John Pearson agreed that it is a good suggestion with good intent.

Deb Lewis agreed that adding criteria to the list, maybe a step toward having a publishable paper that could then maybe submitted to the Journal of the Iowa Academy of Science or another appropriate journal.

Scott Moats was especially supportive of the management recommendations.

***Motion was made by Liz Christiansen to include the recommended language as suggested by Laura Jackson. Seconded by Scott Moats. Motion carried.***

Laura Jackson said that she will work with John Pearson and Daryl Howell on the proper wording.

Cindy Peterson asked if the surveys on Vincent Bluff and Perkins Prairie were already in progress.

John Pearson said that they have started some preliminary work but more work still needs to be done.

RFP schedule:

- ❖ released in mid-January
- ❖ due in mid-March
- ❖ selection by the board in April

## **BRUSHY CREEK TRAIL**

During 2006, the creek in the south end of the preserve eroded a bank adjacent to the trail. Several board members and staff conducted a site visit on December 15 to view the situation.

John Pearson gave an overview of the preserve. This is one of the few preserves that has a trail open to horse back riding. It was approved as part of the preserve in 1994.

The concern is that a portion of the bank is being washed out by the stream. A rain event in May of 2006 eroded a part of the bank, which is moving closer to the trail. Area manager, Chad Kelchen talked with Dick Wilson, DNR engineer to see what it would take to fix the cut bank so that it would no longer threaten the trail. He recommended an earth moving project that would move fill from a sand bar and push it over to the cut bank and then hold that down with heavy boulders. The average boulder weight would be about 250 pounds. There would also be wing dikes that would divert the present flow of the creek down a new course to get the water to stop flowing where the problem lies. This should last for years as long as it is routinely maintained.

The management plan adopted at the time of dedication refers to the reason why the preserve was set up. Under specific land management strategies for geological areas, it states that no activities will be permitted that will alter the contour of the land surface, disturb the sequence of underlying stimulate erosional activity. The prohibition includes use of heavy equipment. That's the potential conflict of the repair. Another thing to consider is that the trails are under the purview of the Brushy Creek Advisory Trail Board – 455A.8.

DNR staff met on January 2<sup>nd</sup> with the Brushy Creek Trails Advisory board. It was clear from that meeting that they have a concern that the trail remain open for use. It's an important trail to all users.

**Donna Christiansen**, Brushy Creek Trails Advisory Board member read the following comments:

*I was involved in the creation of the Brushy Creek Legislative Compromise.*

*During a Legislative Council meeting, I was asked to assist Senator James Riordan in choosing an additional 2000 acres to add to the existing Brushy Creek Recreation Area.*

*Senator Riordan and I toured the area near Brushy Creek. Our recommendation to the Council was to purchase the additional 2000 acres from farms located between the Des Moines River and the southern boundary of the existing brushy Creek recreation area.*

*Legislation was passed and land acquisition began. This legislation included the creation of the Brushy Creek Trails Advisory Board. I have been a member of that Board since its conception.*

*After the majority of the land had been purchased, it became apparent a permanent trail system through the Preserve would be needed to connect the new southern addition to the existing northern trail system and the northern equestrian campground.*

*The Legislative Council requested I assist the DNR staff with the project. Ranger Bill Bird, DNR Trail Planner Mark Edwards and I rode horses through the Preserve to choose the best location for the purposed Preserve Trail.*

*During this same time, I attended a Preserve Board meeting and spoke about the importance of this trail. I also attended the Preserve Board Brushy Creek Tour which allowed the Preserve Board Members the opportunity to walk and view the purposed trail location.*

*The Preserve Board gave their approval to move forward with the construction of the trail. Members of the Brushy Creek Trails Advisory Board assisted the DNR staff in the construction of the trail on volunteer work days.*

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*In 1993, the Iowa Legislature drafted and passed legislation to insure the continued existence and maintenance of Iowa's first and only sanctioned trial system in an Iowa Preserve.*

*I believe it is the responsibility of the Brushy Creek Trails Advisory Board, the Preserves board and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources to work together to honor the Brushy Creek Legislative Compromise.*

-----End of comment -----

Bob McKay said that the bank has a lot of cutbanks. It's a natural feature.

Greg Van Fossen said that the routine maintenance would probably include checking the rip rap after a major rain event.

Deb Lewis said that she attended the Brushy Creek Advisory meeting as the Preserves liaison. They do not want to see the trail closed but they would support a slight moving of the trail.

John Pearson said that the trail could be moved several yards back to the north. It would be a temporary fix with very minimal impacts.

Scott Moats said that we have a quick, easy fix that would solve the problem for 10-15 years or longer. Before we come in and intrude on a natural process, we should try the easy option first by moving trail as necessary. Cutbanks are a natural process of a geological preserve and there are many cut banks along the stream. Where would you being to draw the line.

Bob McKay suggested that rather than using class D riprap, fieldstone would look a lot more natural.

Chad Keldren said that we could leave the cutbank and trail as is, but we should fence it just to let people know that there is a safety issue.

***Motion was made by Scott Moats to temporarily leave the trail as is, and if it becomes unusable then it will be at the discretion of the DNR to relocate the trail to the best possible location. Seconded by Carl Kurtz. Motion carried.***

Liz Christiansen shared a copy of the newly designed Conservationist, now called the Iowa Outdoors magazine. The next issue will include the an article on the Fossil and Prairie Park in Floyd County and a highlight on former Chair, Neil Bernstein and his work with turtles.

Our current DNR director, Jeff Vonk will be stepping down after six years of service. He will begin his new duties as Secretary of Game Fish and Parks in South Dakota on January 16<sup>th</sup>. His leadership help build leadership at places like Storm Lake, Clear Lake, Okoboji and Honey Creek. He also encouraged lowans to accept responsibilities for the State of Iowa's natural resources.

The new director will be Rich Leopold, who is the current director of the Iowa Environmental Council.

### **VINCENT BLUFF**

Blake Mayberry of the Loess Hills Preservation Society presented information on the proposed prairie preserve in Council Bluffs.

Vincent Bluff is a unique and natural area located in the urban part of Council Bluffs. The Loess Hills Preservation society believes that every bluff top prairie is really special. In the last 30 years, we have seen an awareness of this land form. We are still under threat by urban development.

There is a huge community of people; the Iowa Prairie Network, Loess Hills Preservation society, Loess Hills Alliance, Nature Conservancy and individual land owners that want to save the hills. We feel with all the pressures that surround the area, state preserve status is the highest amount of protection that we would like to seek out. Creating a preserve doesn't just save a landscape, it has the power to change the way people think about landscape.

Vincent Bluff was originally apart of a farm owned by the Vincent family. With the help of the landowner and conservation groups, the property was to remain undeveloped.

There is rich biodiversity. Since the preliminary survey, we have discovered numerous plants and flowers. We match up with nearly any preserve in the hills when it comes to the biodiversity of our plant community.

Being in the middle of Council Bluffs, we believe this would continue to be an educational resource to teach people about the Loess Hills. We have implemented one of the first conservation friendly parking lots in the area to feature pervious paving blocks to allow the water to infiltrate.

This is a good place to make a statement about what we value in Iowa. When people first enter our state, we want them to see the bluff. It is visible from Interstates 80 and 29. Having a preserves system helps keep college students from leaving the state.

Vincent Bluffs is an exceptional biological and geological treasure. This area becomes a very important to preserve because of it's scenic value. It's Iowa's natural billboard.

The City of Council Bluffs owns a majority of the property. There are portions of the property still being held by the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation.

Terry Oswald, President of the Loess Hills Preservation Society said that the current size of the proposed preserve is 36 acres, but there are adjacent property owners that are friendly towards the project that have land. We hope to expand the size to 80-90 acres. The City board and mayor are all in favor of this site as a preserve.

Laura Jackson asked if the proposed preserve would be effected runoff from adjacent land.

Blake Mayberry said that our concerns have mainly been that we're not impacting the neighbors downstream.

Carl Kurtz said that he visited the site and it's a good example of a preserve plus it's on the top of the watershed.

The board discussed whether or not they thought the proposed land met the criteria of state preserve status.

John Pearson said that this is only an informational item. Our next step would be to visit the site and look into possible funded proposals for studies on the property. After research has been done and the site has been visited, then a formal decision would need to be made.

Steven Ressler, from Southern Iowa asked why the board wouldn't consider this land for preserve status since it clearly has great attributes for a preserve.

Laura Jackson explained that the board needs to look at a variety of issues including, species, habitat, surroundings, location, etc. We as a board can not/should not approve every piece of land that is presented for preserve status. It must meet the preserve criteria. We also need to maintain the integrity of the system and to keep it unique.

## **PRESERVE UPDATES**

### **Ames High Prairie**

Laura Norian of the Nature Conservancy said that last year, we entered into an MOU with Story County to help clear some brush. The brush piles have been burned in the past. Story County brought in a tree shearer and brush mower. The section was cleared well, but we have huge brush piles as a result. We feel uncomfortable with burning the piles. I contacted All Seasons Tree service and they said they could remove them. He did notice some nice trees in the brush pile and ones that we're still standing for decking boards. He presented me with a proposal of \$7,000 to remove these brush piles, partly because of the location of the piles. The large chipper would not be able to go on site. As a result, he would like to clear some trees and give us \$7,600 for them and then the price to clear all the trees would be about \$7,200. I would like to know your opinion. The extra money would go into the Ames High stewardship endowment.

### **Anderson Prairie**

The adjacent neighbor encroached onto the preserve with their tile lines. Last year, the board agreed to endorse the area managers plan to repair the damages and to make the outlet more compatible with the natural environment of the preserve. The condition was that the land owner responsible for the encroachment still needed to go through the DNR permitting system and accept the conditions set forth in the permit. They resisted acknowledging the permit. The latest letter basically wants to call everything good, but they still haven't received a permit. The department has referred this case to the Attorney General's Office.

### **Silver Lake Fen**

Daryl Howell said that there is a proposed housing development going up next door. The housing developer is wanting to put in a wetland or surface drainage area on the state land, which would somewhat protect the preserve but on the other hand since it is their development, why is it coming on our land.

Laura Jackson asked why we should have to accept that on our land.

John Pearson suggested placing the wetland on the private land next to the preserve. We may be presented with either having the wetland on our land or

there won't be a wetland at all. Some of the area where they could build is on a very wet aquifer. It would be to their best interest not to build in these areas. Their constant question how much of a buffer/set back is needed (20 feet, 30, 50)? Right now, we do not have a good answer.

We need to find out what our legal rights are with our internal legal staff.

### **Marietta Sand Prairie**

Carl Kurtz said that the latest addition to Marietta is 200 acres which was dedicated back in late October. The original size of Marietta is about 17 acres. The Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation worked with the Marshall County Conservation board which now has title to the whole property, but only the 17 acres is a state preserve. The species are so diverse because of the sand and the wetness and dryness of the land. The seed was harvested from other preserves and then planted at Marietta. It's a lot of work but the response is quick. We are hoping to harvest seed every year, so we can re-seed a lot of the upland area.

### **Steele Prairie**

John Pearson said that Ginger Vietor is the new director of the Cherokee County Conservation Board. She has taken an interest in doing some innovative work at Steele Prairie. Steele Prairie has suffered from a lack of management for various reasons. A phone conference was held in October to discuss the management issues. We had planned for a fall burn which did happen. We will plan to burn the upland area later in the year due to brome problems.

### **Iowa Prairie Network Project**

Inger Lamb with the Iowa Prairie Network and Iowa Native Lands was interested in helping the preserves board get more work done. She has offered some secretarial work from their secretary to gather contact information on all of the preserve land managers. This will be a great resource for us as we invite and update the land managers on the prairie conference in July and newsletter updates.

Laura Jackson had drafted a letter to the preserve managers asking for volunteers to the eyes and ears for each preserve.

### **Sheeder Prairie Workday**

The Iowa Prairie Network coordinated a workday of brush control and seed collection in November. About 15 volunteers showed up and engaged in various tasks. Bill Johnson headed up the seed harvest effort.



### **Hawkeye Wildlife Area**

Neil Bernstein has prepared the first draft of a management plan for a proposed preserve.

Daryl Howell said that he and John have reviewed the plan. There are still some maps that need to be included. Hopefully, this item will be on our next agenda.

### **Bixby State Park**

Deb Lewis said that Bill Norris conducted a survey at Bixby State Park and Preserve. He asked me to be apart of converting his report to the DNR into a publishable format. We are expecting to be in an upcoming issue of the Iowa Academy of Science Journal.

Laura Jackson encouraged board members to promote and raise awareness of the State Preserve Board system.

### **PRESERVE LAND MANAGERS CONFERENCE**

The Seminar is set for July 12-13 in Sioux City at the Dorothy Pecaut Center.

Thursday, July 12<sup>th</sup> (AM) – Preserves board meeting

Thursday, July 12<sup>th</sup> (PM) - Conference with the land managers

Friday, July 13<sup>th</sup> (AM) – Tour of surrounding preserves (Mount Talbot, Broken Kettle and Five Ridge Prairie State Preserve)

Friday, July 13<sup>th</sup> (PM) through Saturday – Annual Iowa Prairie Network Conference begins

John Pearson said that the final program should be finalized by the next meeting.

### **OPEN DISCUSSION**

Laura Jackson said that she will draft a letter of appreciation for Jeff Vonk's support of the preserves board system.

Daryl Howell passed out information on management for butterflies by Scott and Ann Swengel from Wisconsin.

Donald Wright from Ohio has been coming to Iowa studying moths. He has collected at Hayden Prairie, where he found a new species. It is now published and has been named after Dr. Hayden.

This would be a great item to highlight in the Iowa Outdoors magazine.

## **NEXT MEETINGS**

April 5<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> (Thursday and Friday) – visit to Fort Atkinson and Montauk State Preserve

Liz Christiansen suggested presenting a certificate of appreciation to the gentlemen at Fort Atkinson.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

***Motion was made by Liz Christiansen to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Scott Moats. Motion carried.***

With no further business to come before the State Preserves Advisory Board, Chairperson Laura Jackson adjourned the meeting at 2:50 PM on January 5, 2007.

## **A**

Adjournment, 10  
Ames High Prairie, 7  
Anderson Prairie, 7  
Approval of agenda, 1  
Approval of Minutes, 1

## **B**

Bixby State Park, 9  
Board Members Present, 1  
Brushy Creek Trail, 3

## **C**

call to order, 1

## **H**

Hawkeye Wildlife Area, 9

## **I**

Iowa Prairie Network Project, 8

## **M**

Marietta Sand Prairie, 8

## **N**

Next Meeting, 10

## **O**

Open Discussion, 9

## **P**

Preserve land managers conference, 9  
preserve updates, 7

## **R**

RFP for Fiscal year 2008, 2

## **S**

Sheeder Prairie Workday, 8  
Silver Lake Fen, 7  
staff present, 1  
Steele Prairie, 8

## **V**

Vincent Bluff, 5